

P. J. Riis: *Hamā*. Danske arkæologers udgravninger i Syrien 1930-38. København: Carlsbergfondet; Rhodos 1987. 174 S. zahlr. Abb. 200 dKr.

The book is a lively account of the Danish excavations at Hama on the Orontes, and in the same time an outline of the history of the city, as revealed in the process or known already otherwise. The author, one of the members of the expedition, is responsible for several volumes of the final publication (Hama II 3: 'Les cimetières à crémation', 1948; IV 2: Les verreries et poteries médiévales, with V. Poulsen and E. Hammer-shaimb, 1957; II 2: Les objets de la période dite syro-hittite (Age du Fer), with M.-L. Buhl, in print; also a catalogue of the Hama collection in the Carlsberg Museum: Hama-Samlingen en Gave fra Carlsbergfondet, 1943 and 1959).

The excavations, sponsored by the Carlsberg Foundation, were entrusted to Harald Ingholt, who had already distinguished himself in Syria while digging several tombs in Palmyra. Ingholt directed the excavation work from the beginning to the end, and did publish a short report: 'Rapport préliminaire sur sept campagnes de fouilles à Hama en Syrie', Det kgl. danske Videnskaberne Selskabs arkæologisk-kunsthistoriske Meddelelser III, 1, København 1940. His later occupations diverted him, how-

ever, from assuming the final publication, some parts of which were long delayed.

The present book gives a concise and well-illustrated sketch of the history of Hama since the prehistoric periods known from a deep sounding on the tell, through the Bronze Age, the Biblical period, the Graeco-Roman Epiphaneia, the Middle Ages, and finally the centuries of the Ottoman rule. For each period, the local evidence is set against the large background of the Middle East, allowing the reader to form an idea of the city's importance and character.

The book is intended for the general public and it shall probably be enjoyed by Scandinavian readers. For others, like myself, the reading is labourious, but there remain the charming water-colours and humorous drawings by Ejnar Fugmann. Together with some photographs, they render the lost atmosphere of the great Islamic city. For an archaeologist, the most interesting part of the book is the chapter 'Working day and holiday of the excavators' (16-41). The description of everyday life in Hama in the thirties has an exotic flavour vividly registered in the author's memory. Life in Syria, on excavation and elsewhere, has changed very much since those days, and one cannot help but feel nostalgic about Hama as it used to be half a century ago.

The medieval and Turkish city, as described on pp. 113f, is no more since the tragic days in 1982. The buildings fine and humble recorded by Riis, Fugmann, and others, are gone the same way as the palaces of the Bronze and Iron Ages. The book is a memorial to all this past, remote and near.

Warszawa

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